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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/553,036	10/11/2005	Minoru Mizusawa	278647US3PCT	6685
22850 7590 04/01/2009 OBLON, SPIVAK, MCCLELLAND MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C. 1940 DUKE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314				
EXAMINER MERKLING, MATTHEW J				
ART UNIT 1795		PAPER NUMBER		
NOTIFICATION DATE 04/01/2009		DELIVERY MODE ELECTRONIC		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/553,036

Applicant(s)

MIZUSAWA ET AL.

Examiner

MATTHEW J. MERKLING

Art Unit

1795

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 09 January 2009.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 1-19 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SE-08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 1/11/06, 12/15/08
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restrictions

1. Applicant's election with traverse of Group II (claim 20) in the reply filed on 1/09/09 is acknowledged. The traversal is on the ground(s) that a search of the two groups would not place a serious burden on the Examiner. This is not found persuasive because the two groups do not have unity of invention, as set forth in the restriction requirement and would constitute a burdensome search to the examiner.

The requirement is still deemed proper and is therefore made FINAL.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

4. Claim 20 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kudo et al. (US 6,413,479) in view of Miura et al. (WO 02/098790 A1, with English language equivalent US 2004/0144029 A1).

Regarding claim 20, Kudo discloses a method for starting a fuel reforming apparatus (col. 7 lines 12-18) wherein an assembled unit of a reformer has associated instruments (Fig. 23A), an interior of said vessel being utilized as a flow path of combustion gas for the reformer (see flow path of combustion exhaust gas in Fig. 23A), the associated instruments or a water vaporizer, a low-temperature shift converter (3, col. 8 lines 33-37) and a CO remover (4) being arranged in said flow path (see Fig. 23A), characterized by burning startup fuel so that resultant combustion gas from said burnt startup fuel is heat exchanged with the reformer and is guided to said flow path while being still hot, whereby the combustion gas flows around and heats the shift converter and the CO remover (see col. 21 lines 5-63 which discusses the operation of the reformer during a startup phase).

Kudo does not explicitly disclose that during startup, a primary fuel is not sent to the reformer. However, Kudo does disclose that prior to reaching an activation temperature, the reformer, shift reactor and CO remover do not produce a reformed gas (col. 21 lines 54-63). As such, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to not flow primary fuel through the reformer prior to the reformer reaching a temperature in which a reformed gas is actually produced, thereby saving the cost of primary fuel.

Furthermore, while Kudo teaches an apparatus in which a vessel contains a reformer along with several associated instruments, Kudo does not explicitly disclose an assembled unit of a reformer with its associated instruments is covered with and enclosed by a vessel to form a heat insulating layer therearound.

Miura also discloses an apparatus in which a reformer is contained in vessel along with several associated instruments (see abstract, Fig. 1).

Miura teaches the vessel containing a heat insulating layer (34) on the outside in order to prevent heat dissipating to the outside (paragraph 44).

As such, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include the heat insulating layer of Miura on the vessel of Kudo in order to prevent heat dissipating to the outside.

Conclusion

5. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MATTHEW J. MERKLING whose telephone number is (571)272-9813. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8:30-4:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Alexa Neckel can be reached on (571) 272-1446. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/M. J. M./
Examiner, Art Unit 1795

/Alexa D. Neckel/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1795